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A RAW TAKE ON THE WESTERN

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HOLIDAY $CAMMERS

Planning on giving back this holiday season? Make sure you're actually spreading cheer and not getting scammed with these tips. 6

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WELCOME TO METRO PHILLY

KRISTIN TOUSSAINT, REPORTER

The holidays bring out the charitable side in many of us, but unfortunately, others use the season to take advantage of such generosity. To help you give back without getting scammed, Metro spoke with a personal finance expert at the consumer info site NextAdvisory. Check out the tips on page 6 and at **metrophilly.us.**

STUDENT DEBTS NIXED FOR FRAUD VICTIMS

The U.S. Education Department Wednesday canceled the student-loan debts of 12,900 people defrauded by defunct Corinthian Colleges, but its announcement that it will give varying amounts of debt relief in the future set off fierce criticism. For-profit higher-education provider Corinthian collapsed in 2015 amid government investigations into how many of its graduates found gainful employment. An internal review released this month showed the Education Department had stopped discharging loans of former attendees of Corinthian and other failed for-profit schools once President Donald Trump took office. The department added that it also had denied 8,600 requests for relief from Corinthian loans. It gave no reason for the denials and no value for the canceled debt.

BITCOIN VALUE FALLS TO ONE-WEEK LOW

Bitcoin fell more than 10 percent Wednesday to a one-week low of $15,800 at cryptocurrency exchange Bitstamp, losing almost one-fifth of its value from a peak hit three days ago. The digital currency has been sliding since it reached a record high of $19,666 on Sunday, when the exchange giant CME Group launched bitcoin futures, one week after its rival Cboe Global Markets listed the world's first bitcoin futures. Bitcoin's monumental gains this year — its price has soared about 19 times — have spurred caution and alarm among some policymakers.

SOMERSAULT SANTA

3 A man dressed as Santa Claus somersaults during a charity event for socially disadvantaged children at the Fitnesscenter Meridian Gym in Hamburg, Germany.

GETTY IMAGES

5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

CHIPOTLE RESTAURANT UNDER INVESTIGATION

Shares of Chipotle Mexican Grill Inc. fell as much as 3.3 percent after a report that public-health officials are investigating a possible illness outbreak in one of the company's restaurants in Los Angeles. An email from the Los Angeles Health Department's Acute Communicable Disease Control unit says the agency "is aware of reports of illness and is investigating," according to the Business Insider report. Chipotle said the company is aware of a few online reports, but said there is no clinical validation associated with them. The company also said it has not been contacted by customers directly to substantiate these claims. At least three reports from customers on iwaspoisoned.com say they suffered from vomiting and diarrhea after eating at a Chipotle restaurant in Los Angeles.

UNITED THERAPEUTICS TO PAY $210 MILLION

United Therapeutics Corp. will pay $210 million to resolve U.S. claims that the drugmaker used a charity as a conduit to illegally cover Medicare patients' out-of-pocket drug costs in order to eliminate price sensitivity and to boost sales. The U.S. Attorney's Office in Massachusetts on Wednesday announced the settlement, one of the first to emerge from an industrywide investigation into pharmaceutical companies' financial support of patient-assistance charities. Drug companies are prohibited from subsidizing co-payments for patients enrolled in the government healthcare program Medicare. But companies may donate to nonprofits providing co-pay assistance as long as they are independent. Amid increased attention to rising drug prices in the United States, more scrutiny has focused on donations from drugmakers.

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SHOE CARNIVAL

Farewell, sweet tokens: SEPTA begins phasing out token fares

The jingle-jingle of SEPTA tokens is a sound that soon will become only memory.

SAM NEWHOUSE
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The inevitability of change became a little more evident in Philadelphia on Wednesday, when SEPTA announced that in January, it will begin phasing out token sales from subway and el train stations.

A relic of Philadelphia's past, considered by some an archaic piece of transit technology that most American cities have ditched in favor of disturbingly inauthentic, plastic swipe cards, SEPTA tokens still occupy a special place in many commuters' hearts.

But not for long. In mid-January 2018, cashiers at Market-Frankford and Broad Street line stations will stop selling the tokens. Token vending machines will also be phased out, SEPTA announced on Wednesday.

"With token sales declining due to riders moving to the SEPTA Key, approximately half of the station vending machines on the Market-Frankford and Broad Street lines have already been removed," SEPTA said. "Beginning in mid-January, cashier sales will end and the 40 remaining token machines will be removed over a six-week period — with token sales at all these locations ending on or about March 1, 2018."

Tokens won't be completely gone: They "will continue to be sold at major SEPTA sales offices, Regional Rail stations and at over 200 third-party retailers until further notice," SEPTA added consolingly.

But this phase-out indicates that the day when tokens are no longer accepted is not too distant.

It's not exactly a shock: If you are a token-lover, you've no doubt noticed the disappearance of token-friendly turnstiles as SEPTA shifts all payments to the SEPTA Key method.

Reloadable SEPTA Key cards have mostly replaced "legacy" magnetic strip Transpasses, which as of last year are no longer sold at sales offices, SEPTA said.

Key cards are free with a minimum $10 initial payment.

Using the Travel Wallet feature, unused tokens can be transferred to SEPTA Key Cards using fare kiosks at SEPTA stations.

For more information, visit septa.org/key.

SEPTA tokens will soon be a thing of the past. ALEXIS SACHDEV

DREAMERS

'Dreamer' bill to reach Senate floor in January: Senator

A bipartisan immigration bill addressing the fate of so-called Dreamers, young adults who were brought to the United States as children, will be debated on the Senate floor in January, Republican Sen. Jeff Flake said Wednesday.

"Bipartisan #DACA bill will be on the Senate floor in January," Flake wrote in a post on Twitter.

"DACA" refers to former President Barack Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals order that temporarily protected around 800,000 Dreamers from deportation. President Donald Trump announced in September he was terminating the program but had asked Congress to devise a more permanent solution.

Flake said in an emailed statement that Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has promised to bring such a bill to the full Senate next month. Aides to McConnell would not comment.

Republicans have been clamoring for more immigration enforcement throughout the United States. Democrats have been opposed to that as part of a Dreamer measure, saying it is a way for the Trump administration to step up its deportations of undocumented relatives of Dreamers, thus breaking up families currently in the United States.

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How to avoid holiday scammers

Make sure your donations count and you're not being fleeced with these tips.

KRISTIN TOUSSAINT
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For many people, the holiday season is a great time to give back. Unfortunately, that also means scammers are ready and waiting to take advantage of the holiday generosity. Metro spoke with Michael Osakwe from consumer info siteNextAdvisor for tips on how to avoid holiday scams.

How common are holiday scams?
Michael Osakwe: There is no hard data on the number of charity scams that occur each year, but many experts suggest that scammers do go into high gear come holiday season. There is data suggesting that the holidays tend to be the most popular time to give, so it's possible that this also plays some role in the increased frequency of scams during the season.

What's the first piece of advice for someone looking to find a charity to donate to?
In order to avoid trouble, individuals who want to donate this holiday season should stick to giving to charities they recognize or are otherwise familiar with. In the instance that someone develops an interest in a new cause or charity, they can use various registries like Give.org, Charity Navigator, Charity Watch or Guide Star to verify the legitimacy of the charity. The IRS also maintains a database of charities and organizations, too.

Who are the most vulnerable targets?
Since charity scams target anyone who wishes to donate, the truth is that everyone's vulnerable. You could possibly make an argument that since millennials have been considered the "most generous" generation and also the most likely to fall for scams that they're potentially more likely to encounter or fall for one of these scams, but there's no data directly confirming this.

Plan on donating to charities this holiday season? Watch out for scammers, experts warn. GETTY IMAGES

What are the biggest red flags that something is a scam?
Typically, all of the signs of a scam will be present within seconds of a scammer's initial approach. Scammers tend to be very general about their purpose because they usually engage victims through mass unsolicited messages. Additionally, scammers' pitches tend to promote both a false sense of urgency and an emotional response, while legitimate charities encourage donors to give at their leisure.

How do you know if you've been scammed, and how can you report it?
Unlike other scams, the pretense of donating to charity provides a really good context for taking money. Donors expect to part with their money after donating and don't necessarily follow-up with how an organization spends their contribution. In that regard, unless a scammer combines a charity scam with some other type of harmful behavior, like identity theft, it may be hard for a victim to learn they were scammed.

What else can people donate, besides money, that may prevent them from being scammed?
People should consider donating goods, like clothing or groceries, or their time to charities in their community. The good news is that the former is tax deductible, assuming the organization is authorized by the IRS to accept tax-deductible donations.

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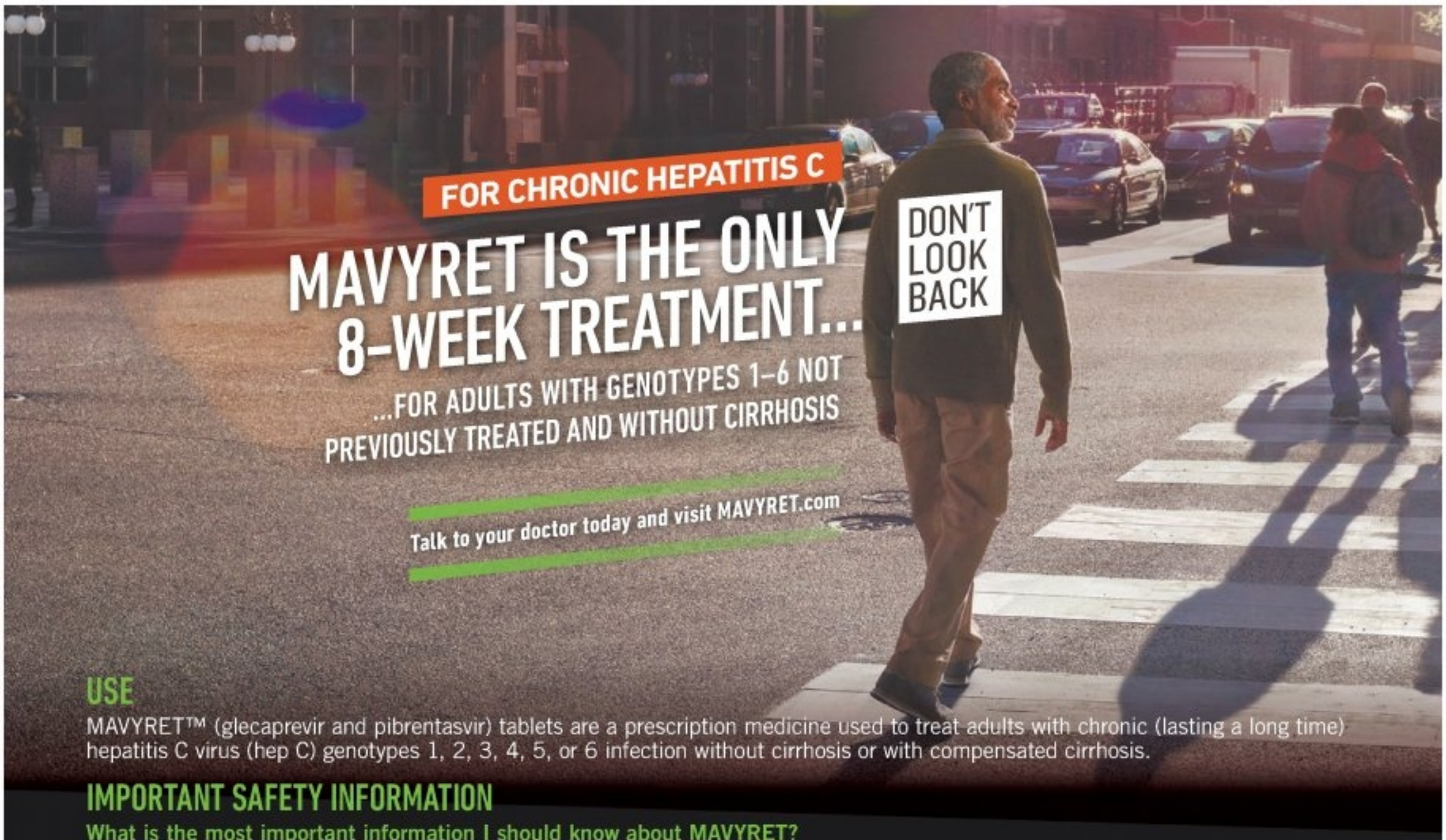
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MAVYRET™ (glecaprevir and pibrentasvir) tablets are a prescription medicine used to treat adults with chronic (lasting a long time) hepatitis C virus (hep C) genotypes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6 infection without cirrhosis or with compensated cirrhosis.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

What is the most important information I should know about MAVYRET?

Hepatitis B virus reactivation: Before starting treatment with MAVYRET, your doctor will do blood tests to check for hepatitis B virus infection. If you have ever had hepatitis B virus infection, the hepatitis B virus could become active again during or after treatment of hepatitis C virus with MAVYRET. Hepatitis B virus becoming active again (called reactivation) may cause serious liver problems including liver failure and death. Your doctor will monitor you if you are at risk for hepatitis B virus reactivation during treatment and after you stop taking MAVYRET.

Do not take MAVYRET if you:

- Have certain liver problems
- Are taking the medicines:
  - atazanavir (EVOTAZ®, REYATAZ®)
  - rifampin (RIFADIN®, RIFAMATE®, RIFATER®, RIMACTANE®)

What should I tell my doctor before taking MAVYRET?

- If you have ever had hepatitis B virus infection, liver problems other than hep C infection, or any other medical conditions.
- If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant, or if you are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. It is not known if MAVYRET will harm your unborn baby or pass into your breast milk. Talk to your doctor about the best way to feed your baby if you take MAVYRET.
- **About all the medicines you take,** including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. MAVYRET and other medicines may affect each other. This can cause you to have too much or not enough MAVYRET or other medicines in your body. This may affect the way MAVYRET or your other medicines work, or may cause side effects.
  - **Do not start taking a new medicine without telling your doctor.** Your doctor can tell you if it is safe to take MAVYRET with other medicines.

What are the common side effects of MAVYRET?

- The most common side effects of MAVYRET are headache and tiredness.

These are not all of the possible side effects of MAVYRET. Tell your doctor if you have any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away.

This is the most important information to know about MAVYRET. For more information, talk to your doctor or healthcare provider.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

If you cannot afford your medication, contact www.pparx.org for assistance.

Please see a brief summary of the full Prescribing Information on the following page.

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MAVYRET™
glecaprevir/pibrentasvir
100 mg/40 mg tablets

MAVYRET™ (MAV-ih-reht) (glecaprevir and pibrentasvir) tablets, for oral use

CONSUMER BRIEF SUMMARY
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Patient Information

Read the Patient Information that comes with MAVYRET before you start taking it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This brief summary does not take the place of talking with your doctor about your medical condition or treatment.

What is the most important information I should know about MAVYRET?

MAVYRET can cause serious side effects, including:

Hepatitis B virus reactivation. Before starting treatment with MAVYRET, your doctor will do blood tests to check for hepatitis B virus infection. If you have ever had hepatitis B virus infection, the hepatitis B virus could become active again during or after treatment of hepatitis C virus with MAVYRET. Hepatitis B virus becoming active again (called reactivation) may cause serious liver problems including liver failure and death. Your doctor will monitor you if you are at risk for hepatitis B virus reactivation during treatment and after you stop taking MAVYRET.

For more information about side effects, see the section "What are the possible side effects of MAVYRET?"

What is MAVYRET?

- MAVYRET is a prescription medicine used to treat adults with chronic (lasting a long time) hepatitis C virus (HCV) genotypes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 infection without cirrhosis or with compensated cirrhosis.

MAVYRET contains the two medicines: glecaprevir and pibrentasvir.

It is not known if MAVYRET is safe and effective in children under 18 years of age.

Do not take MAVYRET if you:

- have certain liver problems
- also take any of the following medicines:
  - atazanavir (EVOTAZ®, REYATAZ®)
  - rifampin (RIFADIN®, RIFAMATE®, RIFATER®, RIMACTANE®)

Before taking MAVYRET, tell your doctor about all of your medical conditions, including if you:

- have ever had hepatitis B virus infection
- have liver problems other than hepatitis C virus infection.
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if MAVYRET will harm your unborn baby.
- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. It is not known if MAVYRET passes into your breast milk. Talk to your doctor about the best way to feed your baby if you take MAVYRET.

Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.

MAVYRET and other medicines may affect each other. This can cause you to have too much or not enough MAVYRET or other medicines in your body. This may affect the way MAVYRET or your other medicines work, or may cause side effects.

Keep a list of your medicines to show your doctor and pharmacist.

- You can ask your doctor or pharmacist for a list of medicines that interact with MAVYRET.
- **Do not start taking a new medicine without telling your doctor.** Your doctor can tell you if it is safe to take MAVYRET with other medicines.

How should I take MAVYRET?

- Take MAVYRET exactly as your doctor tells you to take it. Do not change your dose unless your doctor tells you to.
- Do not stop taking MAVYRET without first talking with your doctor.
- Take 3 MAVYRET tablets at one time each day.
- Take MAVYRET with food.
- It is important that you do not miss or skip doses of MAVYRET during treatment.
- If you miss a dose of MAVYRET and it is:
  - Less than 18 hours from the time you usually take MAVYRET, take the missed dose with food as soon as possible. Then take your next dose at your usual time.
  - More than 18 hours from the time you usually take MAVYRET, do not take the missed dose. Take your next dose as usual with food.

If you take too much MAVYRET, call your doctor or go to the nearest hospital emergency room right away.

What are the possible side effects of MAVYRET?

MAVYRET can cause serious side effects, including:

- **Hepatitis B virus reactivation.** See "What is the most important information I should know about MAVYRET?"

The most common side effects of MAVYRET include headache and tiredness.

These are not all the possible side effects of MAVYRET.

Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

How should I store MAVYRET?

- Store MAVYRET at or below 86°F (30°C).
- Keep MAVYRET in its original blister package until you are ready to take it.

Keep MAVYRET and all medicines out of the reach of children.

General information about the safe and effective use of MAVYRET

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a Patient Information leaflet. Do not use MAVYRET for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give MAVYRET to other people, even if they have the same symptoms that you have. It may harm them. You can ask your doctor or pharmacist for information about MAVYRET that is written for health professionals.

What are the ingredients in MAVYRET?

Active ingredients: glecaprevir and pibrentasvir

Inactive ingredients: colloidal silicon dioxide, copovidone (type K 28), croscarmellose sodium, hypromellose 2910, iron oxide red, lactose monohydrate, polyethylene glycol 3350, propylene glycol monocaprylate (type II), sodium stearyl fumarate, titanium dioxide, and vitamin E (tocopherol) polyethylene glycol succinate. The tablets do not contain gluten.

Manufactured by AbbVie Inc., North Chicago, IL 60064.

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For more information go to www.MAVYRET.com or call 1-800-633-9110.

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South Philly's Miracle on South 13th Street returns

It's a Christmas miracle that happens every Christmas: the Miracle on South 13th Street, one of South Philly's most notable holiday celebrations.

The community spirit and love for Christmas oozes from the thousands of lights decorated around houses and telephone poles and across the block on South 13th from Tasker to Morris streets.

Santa Claus, Rudolph and other notable Christmas characters made appearances at this year's light show.

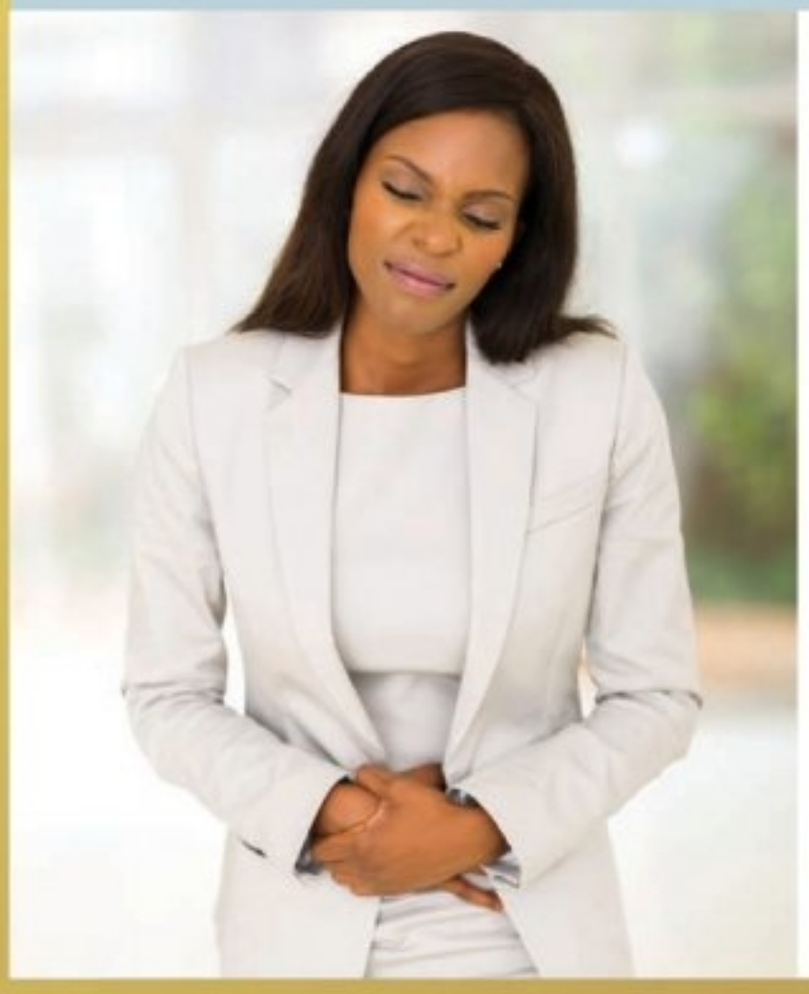
Lights go on at 5 p.m. every day until Jan. 1, and the show is free.

SAM NEWHOUSE

Philadelphia's legendary Miracle on 13th Street takes place until Jan. 1. CHARLES MOSTOLLER

Are you suffering from Heavy Menstrual Bleeding due to

Uterine Fibroids?



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Participants with uterine fibroids who qualify, will receive investigational study medication and study-related tests at no cost. Participants may also receive compensation for their time and travel.

Study participation is voluntary.

For more information please contact Eileen at 484-380-4861 or eileen.davies@ctcphiladelphia.com

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The holidays can be an especially stressful time of year because of all the family get-togethers and obligatory conversations taking place. ISTOCK

How to survive the holidays with your family

Thanks to these tips, you just might make it through the holidays.

NIKKI M. MASCALI
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nikki.mascali@metro.us

The holidays, as you may know, can be a war zone for many families, maybe now more than ever.

But fear not, dear reader: We're arming you with tools to defuse any situation — from avoiding politics as you eat your roast beast (or beets) to Mom and Dad bulldozing over your parenting skills — from Dr. Ish Major, marriage counselor on We TV's "Marriage Boot Camp: Reality Stars."

What are the biggest relationship issues you see this time of year?

Dr. Ish Major: It's the end of the year, so people are normally taking stock of the year, things that have gone wrong, the things that have gone right. It's a big time for family, so you think about folks who aren't there and those you want to be there for the next year. A lot of couples make big decisions about whether this'll be the last Christmas they're going to do together or not — it's a big deal and a stressful time.

Why do we always revert to being a bratty kid when we're home with the whole family?

It's a time warp. If you go home and your parents are still with you, the last version of you that you remember is when you walked out the door (when you moved out). You slip back into that because those are the roles we're used to and comfortable in. It's hard to hide who you are in family; you did that for the first 18 years of life, and it's hard to break out of that cycle when you're shoved back into it.

How can we deter political conversations someone with different views is hell-bent on having?

When those holiday hits start to roll around, it's can really ruin your day, but there's a very, very cordial way to handle that. Preface the conversation by saying, "You know what, we're probably not going to end up agreeing on this, so we can agree to disagree. I will hear you out if you agree to hear me out."

What's the best way to handle relatives trying to discipline your kids or pets in a way that's different than you?

You have to pregame this with your kids. You say, "Here's what I want you to do for the next two to three hours." If you've got to bribe them, do it, promise them something fun.

Once you get in there, grandfolks, older siblings with kids of their own are always going to tell you what to do. Say, "Listen, thank you, guys, but these are my kids. You've got to take a backseat."

How can we carve out alone or friend time without hurting feelings?

It's time management; you've got to prioritize. Some friends you may see at New Year's. Folks you rarely see, family, blood, you've got to put them at the top of the list, and balance that with your partner also.

But at the same time, it doesn't make sense to make yourself miserable, so if this is one of your least-favorite folks in the world, you don't have to put them at the top of the list.

Dr. Ish Major of We TV's "Marriage Bootcamp: Reality Stars" PROVIDED

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Philly cop drove drunk, threatened victims with service revolver: DA

Officer Kevin Klein faces charges of simple assault, DUI and leaving the scene of an accident. GETTY IMAGES

Philly cop arrested one year later for alleged Christmas Eve DUI.

SAM NEWHOUSE
@scnewhouse
sam.newhouse@metro.us

On Christmas Eve 2016, off-duty Philly police officer Kevin Klein allegedly decided to drive through Southwest Philly while inebriated and threatened innocent bystanders with his service revolver when they told him to stop.

But Klein, 36, a nine-year veteran of the force last assigned to the 12th District, will spend this year's Christmas suspended from his job with intent to dismiss and facing charges of simple assault, DUI and leaving the scene of an accident, the Philly DA's office announced Wednesday.

"We all know the dangers of driving under the influence, but as an off-duty Philadelphia Police officer, Kevin Klein certainly knew the dangers of his actions to himself and his fellow bystanders," acting Philadelphia District Attorney Kelley B. Hodge said in a statement. "And then, to use his service revolver during the course of his criminal behavior is deplorable. We expect more of those members of our community who take an oath to protect and serve, and when anyone acts criminally, they will be held accountable for their actions."

Klein's alleged drunken spree began in Southwest Philly on Passyunk Avenue near South 61st Street when the off-duty officer struck an occupied vehicle.

"The vehicle's occupants pursued Klein for several miles to get him to stop, but during the pursuit, the complainants saw Klein swerve several times and strike a concrete median," the DA's office said in a press release. "When Klein finally pulled over, he appeared intoxicated, refused to provide his driving credentials and then pulled out his service weapon and pointed it at the complainants before driving off."

An attorney for Klein could not be immediately reached for comment.

MIDDLE EAST

Trump threatens to cut aid to UN members over Jerusalem vote

President Donald Trump on Wednesday threatened to cut off financial aid to countries that vote in favor of a United Nations resolution calling for the United States to withdraw its decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

"They take hundreds of millions of dollars and even billions of dollars, and then they vote against us. Well, we're watching those votes. Let them vote against us. We'll save a lot. We don't care," Trump told reporters.

The 193-member U.N. General Assembly will hold a rare emergency special session on Thursday — at the request of Arab and Muslim countries — to vote on a draft resolution, which the United States vetoed on Monday in the 15-member U.N. Security Council.

The remaining 14 Security Council members voted in favor of the Egyptian-drafted resolution, which did not specifically mention the United States or Trump but which expressed "deep regret at recent decisions concerning the status of Jerusalem."

Ambassador Nikki Haley, in a letter to dozens of U.N. states seen by Reuters, warned that Trump had asked her to "report back on those countries who voted against us."

Several senior diplomats said Haley's warning was unlikely to change many votes in the General Assembly, where such direct, public threats are rare. Some diplomats brushed off the warning as more likely aimed at impressing U.S. voters.

According to figures from the government's aid agency USAID, in 2016, the U.S. provided some $13 billion in economic and military assistance to countries in sub-Saharan Africa, $1.6 billion to states in East Asia and Oceania, $13 billion to countries in the Middle East and North Africa, $6.7 billion to countries in South and Central Asia, $1.5 billion to states in Europe and Eurasia, and $2.2 billion to Western Hemisphere countries. REUTERS

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Meet Oumuamua, the interstellar object some say is a UFO

Even after research dictates otherwise, some people are still convinced it's a sign of aliens.

SAM BRODSKY
@sammybrods
Samantha.Brodsky@metro.us

Oumuamua translates to "a messenger from afar arriving first." BREAKTHROUGH LISTEN/FACEBOOK

Oumuamua. No, that's not a typo. It's the name the first known interstellar object to enter our solar system. The discovery was made by the Pan-STARRS1 telescope system based at the University of Hawaii's Institute for Astronomy (IfA).

Oumuamua, or as it translates to in Hawaiian, "a messenger from afar arriving first," was clocked at 196,000 mph when it passed by the sun.

Last week, scientists from Breakthrough Listen, a project devoted to finding signs of intelligent life, scanned Oumuamua with the Robert C. Byrd Green Bank Telescope in West Virginia for such activity (read: aliens).

Their search across four radio bands "spanning billions of individual channels" showed no evidence of intelligent life, but people are still arguing that when it comes down to it, Oumuamua's resemblance to an alien spaceship couldn't just be a coincidence.

Theories circulating the internet include that it's something out of "Star Trek" or, of course, "Star Wars."

Alan Fitzsimmons, a professor at Queen's University Belfast and lead author of the recent paper detailing this data, told Metro that though the idea of UFOs is exciting, it's "unfortunately wrong." He stated that it is just "a natural object created around another star."

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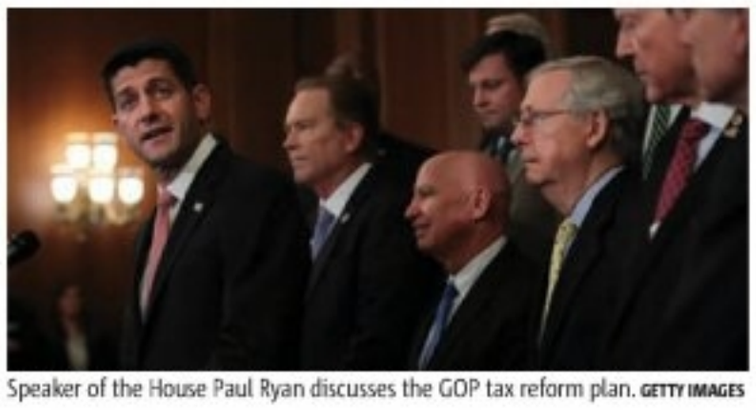
What the recently passed tax bill means for you



Speaker of the House Paul Ryan discusses the GOP tax reform plan. GETTY IMAGES

The Republican-controlled U.S. House of Representatives gave final approval Wednesday to the biggest overhaul of the U.S. tax code in 30 years, sending a sweeping $1.5 trillion bill to President Donald Trump for his signature.

In sealing Trump's first major legislative victory, Republicans steamrolled opposition Democrats to pass a bill that slashes taxes for corporations and the wealthy while giving mixed, temporary tax relief to middle-class Americans.

In addition to cutting the U.S. corporate income tax rate to 21 percent, the debt-financed legislation gives other business owners a new 20 percent deduction on business income and reshapes how the government taxes multinational corporations along the lines the country's largest businesses have recommended for years.

Millions of Americans would stop itemizing deductions under the bill, putting tax breaks that incentivize home ownership and charitable donations out of their reach.

The bill keeps the present number of tax brackets but adjusts many of the rates and income levels for each one. The top tax rate for high earners is reduced. The estate tax on inheritances is changed so far fewer people will pay.

Taxpayers likely will see changes to their paycheck tax withholdings in February. Most households will not see the full effect of the tax plan until they file their 2018 taxes.

In two provisions added to secure Republican votes, the legislation also allows oil drilling in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and removes a penalty under Obamacare for those who do not obtain insurance

"We have essentially repealed Obamacare and we'll come up with something that will be much better," Trump said on Wednesday. REUTERS

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Mindy Kaling is a cool mom now

It's official: Mindy Kaling is now a mother. Aw!

E! News reports that the 38-year-old actress/writer/kween welcomed a daughter, Katherine Kaling, on Dec. 15.

When news broke about Kaling's pregnancy in July, a source told E! News that it was "an unexpected surprise." Kaling has declined to identify the father of her child, but said on the "Today" show that she was "really excited" about the experience.

"It's so unknown to me," she said. "I have a lot of control over a lot of aspects in my life, and this is one where I'm like, 'OK, it's out of my hands,' which is kind of a fun feeling."

Kaling had been largely mum during the pregnancy, instead letting the likes of Oprah and her "Mindy Project" co-stars to do the talking for her.

Congratulations, Mindy! The name Katherine Kaling is classy AF. You did good, babe.

Eva Longoria is preggers

Eva Longoria is pregnant! Probably because babies are the one trend that never goes out of style.

A rep for the "Desperate Housewives" alum confirmed the news to Page Six. This will be the 42-year-old's first child — a boy — with husband José "Pepe" Bastón, whom she married in May 2016. Bastón has three children from a previous marriage.

The pregnancy came as a "total surprise" to the couple, but The Blast reports that they are "ecstatic." Longoria has postponed shooting on a new movie so that she can focus on the pregnancy and family instead.

That's fun! I predict that like 2017, 2018 will be the Oprah giving away cars of having babies. You get a baby, you get a baby, YOU GET A BABY!

the word

Janet Jackson makes like it's 2006 again

Janet Jackson has moved on.

The 51-year-old is reportedly back together with ex-boyfriend Jermaine Dupri, 45. The couple were together for seven years before breaking up in 2009.

A so-called insider tells Us Weekly that after Jackson's tumultuous split from Wissam Al Mana earlier this year, Dupri reached out. "They are getting to know each other all over again... They are 100 percent back together and in love."

The insider also says that Jackson and Dupri had no contact during Jackson's marriage to Al Mana. "[They] had zero communication — she would not talk to him."

Makes sense: Previous sources claim that Al Mana was controlling. In April, a source told Page Six, "She thought [Al Mana] had become too controlling during the pregnancy and she had already allowed him to dictate her appearance and even the way she performed at concerts."

Anyway, yay! I'm glad these two came back to each other. It's like a Christmas miracle, or something.

Catt Sadler quits E! News

Tuesday, Dec. 19 was Catt Sadler's last time gracing television screens on E!. The news anchor announced, via Twitter, that she was stepping down from her longtime role after learning that a "similarly situated male co-host" earns almost double her salary.

The 43-year-old wrote on her website that a company executive informed her about this "massive disparity in pay." After the network reached out to renew and extend her contract, she discovered that her co-host was making "close to double my salary for the past several years."

"The gender pay gap is shrinking, although admittedly we have a long way to go," Sadler wrote. "[H]ow can I operate with integrity and stay on at E if they're not willing to pay me the same as him? Or at least come close?"

E! followed up with a statement to People, saying that they "compensates employees fairly and appropriately based on their roles, regardless of gender." Sure.

E! could not be reached for immediate comment.

SAMANTHA BRODSKY

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- EDUCATIONAL ADVERTISEMENT -

Why Haven't Senior Homeowners Been Told These Facts?

Keep reading if you own a home in the U.S. and were born before 1955.

It's a well-known fact that for many senior citizens in the U.S. their home is their single biggest asset, often accounting for more than 50% of their total net worth.

Yet, according to new statistics from the mortgage industry, senior homeowners in the U.S. are now sitting on more than **6.1 trillion dollars** of unused home equity.[1] With people now living longer than ever before and home prices back up again, ignoring this **"hidden wealth"** may prove to be short sighted.

All things considered, it's not surprising that more than a million homeowners have already used a government-insured Home Equity Conversion Mortgage or "HECM" loan to turn their home equity into extra cash for retirement.

However, today, there are still millions of eligible homeowners who could benefit from this FHA-insured loan but may simply not be aware of this "**retirement secret.**"

Some homeowners think HECM loans sound "too good to be true." After all, you get the cash you need out of your home but you have no more monthly mortgage payments.

NO MONTHLY MORTGAGE PAYMENTS?[2] EXTRA CASH?

It's a fact: no monthly mortgage payments are required with a government-insured HECM loan;[2] however the homeowners are still responsible for paying for the maintenance of their home, property taxes, homeowner's insurance and, if required, their HOA fees.

Another fact many are not aware of is that HECM reverse mortgages first took hold when President Reagan signed the FHA Reverse Mortgage Bill into law 29 years ago in order to help senior citizens remain in their homes.

Today, HECM loans are simply an effective way for homeowners 62 and older to get the extra cash they need to enjoy retirement.

Although today's HECM loans have been improved to provide even greater financial protection for homeowners, there are still many misconceptions.

For example, a lot of people mistakenly believe the home must be paid off in full in order to qualify for a HECM loan, which is not the case. In fact, one key advantage of a HECM is that the proceeds will first be used to pay off any existing liens on the property, which frees up cash flow, a huge blessing for seniors living on a fixed income. Unfortunately, many senior homeowners who might be better off with HECM loan don't even bother to get more information because of rumors they've heard.

That's a shame because HECM loans are helping many senior homeowners live a better life.

In fact, a recent survey by American Advisors Group (AAG), the nation's number one HECM lender, found that over 90% of their clients are satisfied with their loans.

While these special loans are not for everyone, they can be a real lifesaver for senior homeowners like Betty Carter, who recently took out a HECM loan with AAG so that she could finally get the extra cash she needed to fix up her house.

"With the help of AAG, I have been able to repair my home's foundation that I had been putting off for several years, refinish the hardwood floors, paint the interior and will have the exterior painted within a few days. My house is starting to look like my home again and it feels good," says Carter.

FACT: In 1988, President Reagan signed an FHA bill that put HECM loans into law.

The cash from a HECM loan can be used for any purpose. Many people use the money to save on interest charges by paying off credit cards or other high-interest loans. Other common uses include making home improvements, paying off medical bills or helping other family members. Some people simply need the extra cash for everyday expenses while others are now using it as a "safety net" for financial emergencies.

If you're a homeowner age 62 or older, you owe it to yourself to learn more so that you can make an informed decision. Homeowners who are interested in learning more can request a free 2017 HECM loan Information Kit and free Educational DVD by calling American Advisors Group toll-free at **1-800-791-1598**.

At no cost or obligation, the professionals at AAG can help you find out if you qualify and also answer common questions such as:

1. What's the government's role?
2. How much money might I get?
3. Who owns the home after I take out a HECM loan?

You may be pleasantly surprised by what you discover when you call AAG for more information today.

[1]Source: http://reversemortgagedaily.com/2016/06/21/seniors-home-equity-grows-to-6-trillion-reverse-mortgage-opportunity. [2]If you qualify and your loan is approved, a Home Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM) must pay off any existing mortgage(s). With a HECM loan, no monthly mortgage payment is required. A HECM increases the principal mortgage loan amount and decreases home equity (it is a negative amortization loan). AAG works with other lenders and financial institutions that offer HECMs. To process your request for a loan, AAG may forward your contact information to such lenders for your consideration of HECM programs that they offer. Borrowers are responsible for paying property taxes and homeowner's insurance (which may be substantial). We do not establish an escrow account for disbursements of these payments. A set-aside account can be set up to pay taxes and insurance and may be required in some cases. Borrowers must occupy home as their primary residence and pay for ongoing maintenance; otherwise the loan becomes due and payable. The loan also becomes due and payable when the last borrower, or eligible non-borrowing surviving spouse, dies, sells the home, permanently moves out, defaults on taxes or insurance payments, or does not otherwise comply with the loan terms. American Advisors Group (AAG) is headquartered at 3800 W. Chapman Ave., 3rd & 7th Floors, Orange CA, 92868. (Licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Banking 28356),. V2017.08.23_OR

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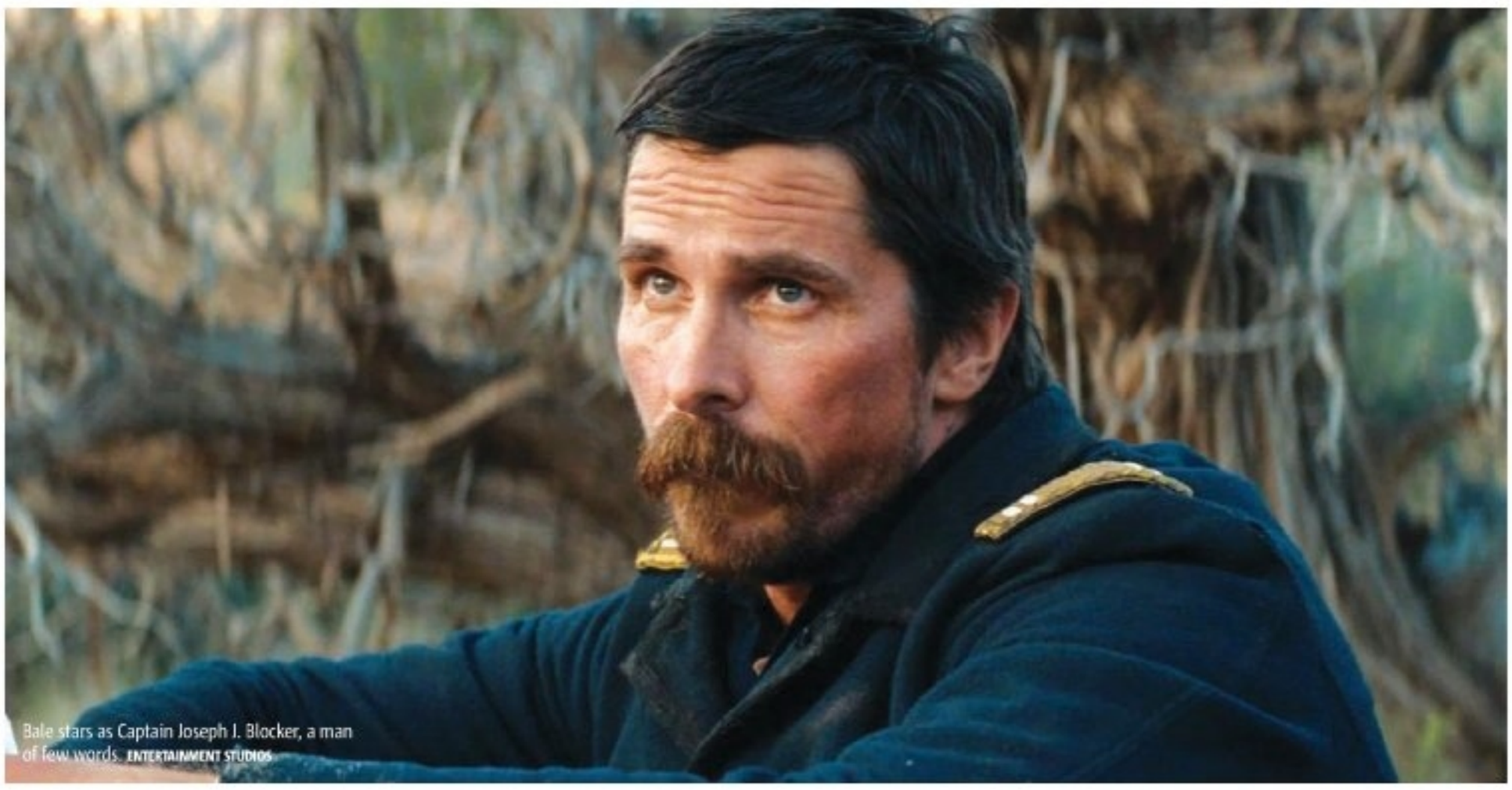
EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

Christian Bale on why 'Hostiles' is tragically relevant



Bale stars as Captain Joseph J. Blocker, a man of few words. ENTERTAINMENT STUDIOS

Sitting down with the Academy Award-winning actor, whose latest film is a decidedly raw take on the Western.

GREGORY WAKEMAN
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gregory.wakeman@metro.us

Christian Bale didn't expect his latest film, "Hostiles" to be so timely when he first read the script.

But as social unrest has multiplied all over America, the Western — which tells the story of a U.S. cavalry officer escorting a dying Cheyenne war chief and his family from New Mexico to Montana in 1892 — has taken on a greater relevance.

"It wasn't something

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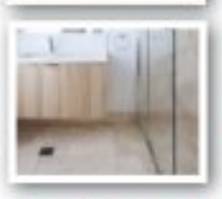

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that I thought about whilst deciding to make it," Bale explains. "I decided to make it because I just thought it was a great story.

"It looks as who we are, who these characters are, and who America is in a raw and visceral way," he continues. "And seeing the division, the comfort that in this country people have started to express, directing hatred toward those who are different. It has become relevant. Tragically relevant."

In "Hostiles," the Bale plays Captain Joseph J. Blocker, a man of very few words. And the famously Method actor went to great lengths to learn about the life and culture of the Cheyenne, as well as the language itself, with help from an indispensable member of the crew, Chief Phillip.

"He would do a blessing each morning. Producers and ADs were understandably a bit [claps hands], because they were like, 'Crack on. Crack on.' But it was a wonderful thing. Because it really settled us and gave a good sense of community to all of the filmmakers.

"You'd have all these hard-arse wranglers and stuntmen bawling their eyes out," he continues. "The nature of the film was a very raw one. And it helped immensely. It was very meaningful and separated it from the herd, and those films that are just rush, rush, rush."

GETTY IMAGES

All of which has combined to give "Hostiles" an integrity that is often lacking from other Hollywood stories, especially when it comes to Westerns.

You'll be able to spot this for yourself when "Hostiles" is released in New York on Dec. 22, while it will be extended across the rest of the country over the next few weeks, into the New Year.

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There are little touches of France everywhere you look. JENNIFER LOGUE

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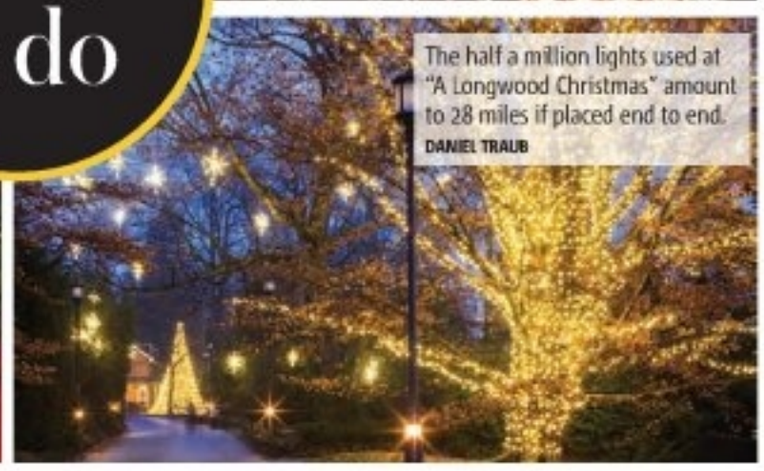

The half a million lights used at "A Longwood Christmas" amount to 28 miles if placed end to end. DANIEL TRAUB

'A Longwood Christmas' is *tres belle*

This year's theme looks to France for inspiration.

JENNIFER LOGUE
@jenniferlogue
jennifer.logue@metro.us

While Christmas in the city is wonderful, sometimes we all need an escape from the concrete and commercialism to stop and smell the roses, and Longwood Gardens is the perfect place to do it.

Its holiday tradition, A Longwood Christmas, dates to the 1950s, when the conservatory opened to the public for its Christmas display. But Communications Director Patricia Evans says there's even more history behind it.

"It really stems back to when [Pierre S.] du Pont, our founder, would have a Christmas display in the conservatory and a party. We continue that legacy today."

The most-visited public garden in the United States begins planning its Christmas masterpiece more than a year in advance.

"We have a display designer who takes the lead in planning and then he works with a cross departmental team who comes up with ideas for themes and color palettes," Evans says. "Our horticultural team has 74 full-time staffers and over 800 volunteers who work throughout the gardens."

And how about all those lights in the outdoor displays? Evans says there are half-a-million lights, which amount to 28 miles if you were to lay them out end-to-end.

"We start to put the lights on the trees over Labor Day Weekend and our arborists work straight through November to get them upin time," she says.

Patricia Evans is the communications director at Longwood Gardens. PROVIDED

In years past, themes have included gingerbread, fruit and birds. But for 2017, the theme for A Longwood Christmas is French, complete with floating mosaics of deconstructed fleurs-de-lis, a Palace of Versailles-inspired music room display and more.

"The French theme comes from Mr. du Pont and his family emigrating from France in the 1800s. He traveled frequently to the great gardens there for the inspiration he brought back to Longwood," Evans says. "We were really tying in his French heritage."

If you're planning on visiting Longwood Gardens this holiday season, be sure to buy your tickets ahead of time.

"Sometimes we do sell out," she says. "The week between Christmas and New Year's is very busy."

And according to Evans, arriving in the afternoon is ideal.

"I say come around 3 p.m. or 3:30 p.m. The lights start to come on around 3:30 and you can enjoy the outside display once you're done checking out the indoor conservatory," she says.

"A Longwood Christmas" is on view through Jan. 7 and is open every single day — including Christmas and New Year's.

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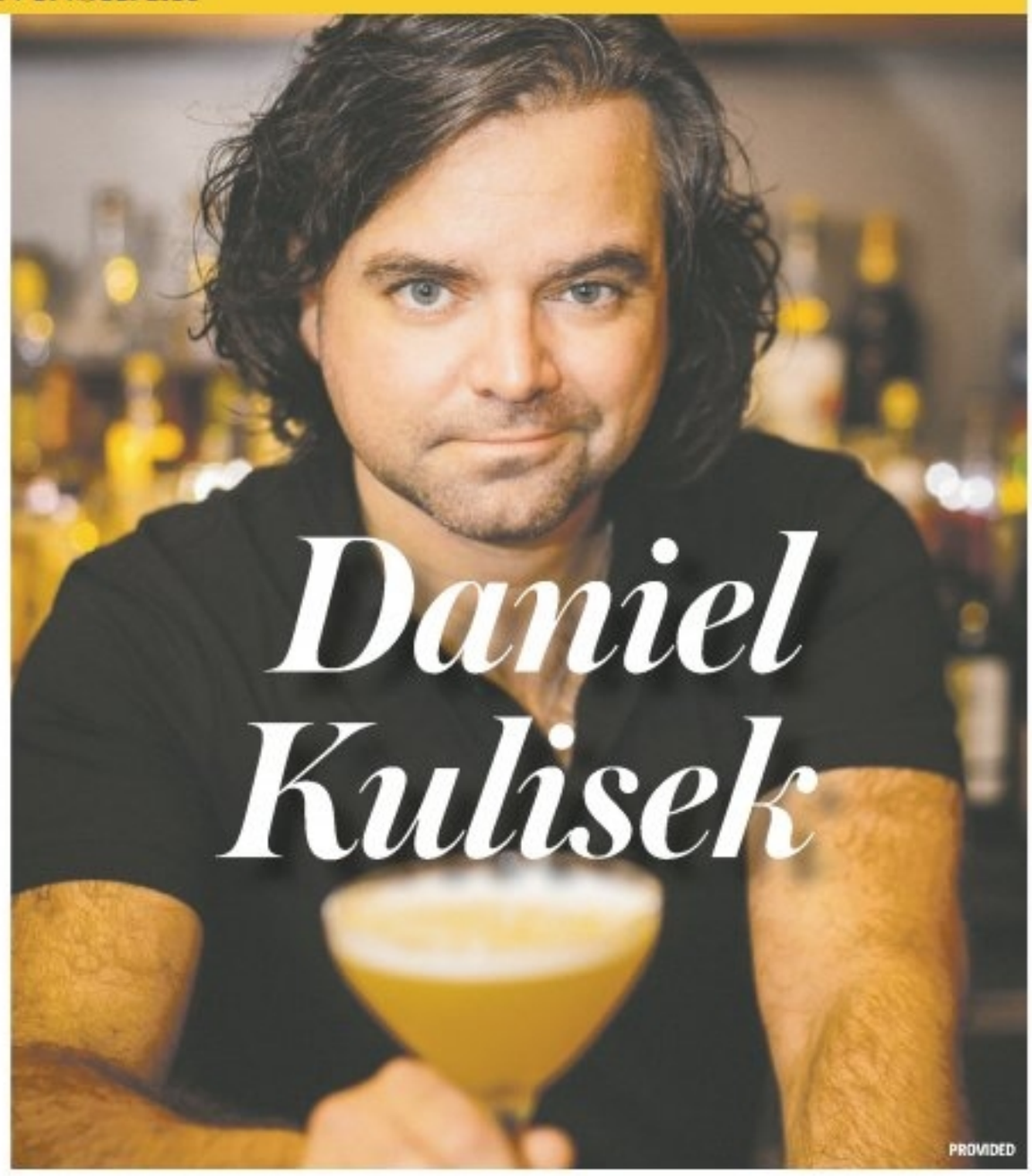
Daniel Kulisek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The bartender and sommelier knows his food, too.

JENNIFER LOGUE
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If Square 1682 on the corner of 17th and Sansom is your go-to spot for drinks, chances are you're already familiar with lead bartender and resident sommelier, Daniel Kulisek.

The 36-year-old is originally from Pine Hills, New Jersey, and still lives over the bridge in Audubon with his wife and 19-month-old son, but has a passion for Philly's food scene and working in the hospitality industry.

"I always say I have the best job in the building. I love the people, I love the experience of being excited about a meal, or a wine, or a cocktail. I love to pass that onto my guests," he says.

Kulisek filled us in on his top spots to grab a bite in Philadelphia and his picks include everything from under-the-radar, authentic Mexican to superstar French bistros on Rittenhouse Square.

Best late-night meal

Good Dog *(224 S. 15th St.)*. The Kitchen is open until 1 a.m. and everything on the menu is phenomenal. Lately, my after work meal has been their white bean chicken chili. So good.

Best meal under $10

Dan Dan *(126 S. 16th St.)*. The Dan Dan noodles are $8 and are always on point. I'm hard pressed to find a more "bang for your buck" deal. Most of the time I end up only finishing half the order, and eating the rest cold in the middle of the night.

Best hidden foodie gem

Las Bugambilias *(148 South St.)*. I'm not sure why I don't hear more about this place. Very authentic Mexican. Their *cochinita pibil* (slow-baked pork) is top-notch.

Place you take out-of-towners

Parc *(227 S. 18th St.)* Working in a restaurant adjacent to a hotel in Rittenhouse, I get asked for restaurant recommendations a lot, and I feel that Parc is the most approachable for guests who don't want to venture too far. Their warm shrimp salad is the tops.

Go-to date spot, hands-down?

Townsend *(1623 E. Passyunk Ave.)*. My wife and I love to come here when we have a night without our son. Great atmosphere for a date night. The roasted rabbit is my favorite thing on the menu.

Best place to catch up with friends

Harp & Crown *(1525 Sansom St.)*. Fun atmosphere, and great food. Lamb meatballs are an essential get on their menu.

Most Instagrammable restaurant

Butcher & Singer *(1500 Walnut St.)*. It's such a beautiful space, and my go-to birthday spot. Get the Delmonico rare. No question.

When he's not crafting cocktails, Kulisek plays music around the city and can often be found next door singing and playing guitar at **Hotel Palomar's** wine hour.

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YOUR WEEKEND STARTS NOW

HOLIDAYS

Science After Hours: Holiday Edition

This 21-plus event celebrates the science behind winter, including the magic behind snow. Guests are encouraged to sport an ugly holiday sweater to contribute to the spirit of the season.
Dec. 21, 7 p.m.
The Franklin Institute, 222 N. 20th St., fi.edu, $20

"Tease of the Sugarplum Fairy"

This sexy show, hosted by luscious burlesque ballerina Lelu Lenore, twists the theme of the holiday classic into something decidedly more adult. Performers include MasoKiss and "boylesque" comedian Brettzo—among others.
Dec. 21, 9 p.m.
Franky Bradley's, 1320 Chancellor St., $12, frankybradleys.com

Bossa Nova Holiday

While exploring the Philadelphia Museum of Art's immense collection, immerse in the sounds of a Brazilian Christmas in the Great Hall. Jackie Ribas and the Carlos Almeida Quintet perform fresh takes on American classics.
Dec. 22, 5 p.m.
Philadelphia Museum of Art
2600 Benjamin Franklin Parkway
philamuseum.org
Free with admission

Mad X-Mas

Mad Rex kicks Christmas into high gear with a holiday party complete with a DJ, holiday specialty cocktails, free hot cocoa and a raffle in support of local charities. Wear a holiday outfit to nab yourself a free Mad Rex IPA.
Dec. 23, 10 p.m.
Mad Rex, 1000 Frankford Ave.
themadrex.com, pay as you go

SLiCE Seven Fishes

Joyous as the Seven Fishes Feast may be, it's not so delightful to cook—or serve, for that matter. SlICE aims to consolidate with a "Pizza of the Seven Fishes" offering of mozzarella topped with clams, mussels, shrimp, tuna, crab meat and sardine, sautéed with olive oil and garlic, then topped with anchovies, lemon and basil.
Dec. 24
SliCE Pizza
Various locations
slicepa.com, $19

Urban Farmer Christmas Dinner

Serving as a destination for a hearty Christmas meal without all the work, Urban Farmer, a farm-to-table outpost, presents a special a la carte menu. A few of the items: oxtail onion soup, goose breast and aged ribeye. Dinner is also served Christmas Day.
Dec. 24, 5 p.m.
Urban Farmer Philadelphia
1850 Benjamin Franklin Parkway
urbanfarmerphiladelphia.com
Pay as you go

Boathouse Row Light Show

Starting at 6 p.m. each night through Christmas, the glorious houses of Boathouse Row will spring to life for five-minute shows. The spectacle is courtesy of the Department of Parks and Recreation.
Through Dec. 25, 6 p.m.
Boathouse Row,
1 Boathouse Row, Free

Red Owl Tavern Christmas Countdown

Each day, grab a different drink special based on the theme of the "12 Days of Christmas." From Dec. 21 through Dec. 25: Gold Rush bourbon cocktail ($8); Wild Turkey Old-Fashioned ($8); French 75 ($8); Turtle Dove punch with rum, amaretto, vanilla, heavy cream and cinnamon ($12); half-priced Kentucky Harvest ($7.5).
Through Dec. 25
Red Owl Tavern, 433 Chestnut St.
redowltavern.com,
pay as you go

PROVIDED

Winterfest Celebration

This holiday libations-and-music event is stocked with a raffle, an ugly Santa hat contest, specialty cocktails like a peppermint martini and music from jazz trio Tammy Huynh. On tap is Founders Canadian Breakfast Stout, Goose Island Bourbon County vintages, Half Acre Vanilla Big Hugs and other craft beers of a darker variety.
Dec. 21, 4 p.m.
The Cambridge, 1508 South St.
cambridgeonsouth.com, Pay as you go

FOOD & DRINK

Layover: Apres-Ski Pop-Up

Launching its global-wine theme night, Jet Wine Bar highlights wines from the Alps and food from Matterhorn, Mont Blanc and beyond. Wines are a Moscato, a Muller Thurgau and a Gamay-Pinot Noir—all $9. A creamy polenta with Italian sausage can accompany the wines for $12.
Dec. 21, 4 p.m.
Jet Wine Bar, 1525 South St.
jetwinebar.com, p Little Carolotta had a mother, a blond woman in the city of Berlin ay as you go

SHOPPING

Liberty Flea

The Captain's Vintage, based out of the boy's gym inside the BOK Building, brings together vendors like small-batch craft brewery Stickman Brews for to-go ales, vegan goods from Crust and a slew of home décor, apparel and antique artisans. Washington, D.C. women's vintage shop Speak Vintage is the special guest vendor.
Dec. 23, 10 a.m.
BOK Building, 1901 S. Ninth St.
libertyflea.com, $5

MUSIC

Future Stars Showcase

World Café Live curates this showcase of local talent from South Jersey, Kennett Square, Folsom and surrounding areas, with genres ranging from rock to pop. Among the bunch: Sugar Rush Rocks as the marquee act, in addition to Annabelle Kempf and The Soundcheck.
Dec. 22, 7 p.m.
World Café Live, 3025 Walnut St.
worldcafelive.com, $12

LGBT

"TMAN" Game Night

Transmasculine people of color are invited for this Christmas Eve gathering for games—a space to relax with Cards Against Humanity, Jenga, chess and Black Card Revoked. Registration is available through the Trans Masculine Advocacy Network.
Dec. 24, 4 p.m.
GALAEI, 149 W. Susquehanna Ave., Free

BRANDON BAKER

CHRISTINA KALFF

Made in Philadelphia Holiday Market

For one of the last times this season, peruse the goods of local artists and craft vendors from around the region on the doorstep of City Hall. More than 50 vendors congregate to sell ornaments, toys, jewelry, artwork and decorations, with a carousel at their center.
Through Jan. 1
Dilworth Park, 1 S. 15th St.
madeinphila.com,
Pay as you go

Get your calendar out — we've rounded up the new hot cities and things to do in the coming year.

Fodor's Travel

The must-see destinations of 2018

Get all the tropical ambiance without the crowds in the Cook Islands. GETTY IMAGES

Cook Islands

Why it's wonderful: If you want overwater bungalows and overpriced everything, by all means, hit Tahiti or Bora Bora. But if you are looking to explore island life in the South Pacific, zip around Rarotonga, the largest of the Cook Islands, on a moped, or hop islands by boat. Visit Maori markets, hike the lush inlands, explore caves and lagoons — all at a fraction of the South Pacific costs.

When to go: The Cook Islands doesn't really experience a rainy season, but it can be slightly cooler from June to August.

Salar de Tunupa, Bolivia

Why it's wonderful: Backpackers have been piling out onto the world's largest salt flats, el Salar de Tunupa for years. It's only now that this high-altitude corner of Bolivia is seeing an influx of hotels and tours.

Travelers normally arrive here at the end of three days of surreal landmarks, including the blood-orange Laguna Colorada where flamingos congregate, and the Dali-like rock formations that rise out of the desert. But the salt flats are the real stars, a surreal white landscape of crisp, unblemished hexagons of salt book-ended by sky-skimming volcanoes.

When to go: The salt flats are at their most magical between February and March, when the rainy season transforms them into a vast mirror.

Split, Croatia

Why it's wonderful: When you first enter Split, it looks like the same drab, box-like architecture that so dominates much of Communist Europe, but soon you'll see it: Diocletian's Palace. It started oh-so-long ago as a retirement home for the Roman emperor Diocletian and has evolved into a vibrant maze of bars and restaurants, shops, and even apartments. In the evenings in warmer months, gather in the square and sit among the ruins and drink at Luxor — touristy, but worth it.

When to go: May or September, when it's warm but not over-touristed.

Armenia

Why it's wonderful: Armenia's rugged mountains and fertile valleys, full of ancient monasteries and traditional villages, are an eco-tourist's dream, and new hiking trails and apps are making it easier to explore the outdoors. Since a 6,000-year-old winery was discovered in Areni village in southern Armenia a decade ago, the area's winemaking has been experiencing a rebirth.

The city of Lille in French Flanders is known for its moules frites. GETTY IMAGES

When to go: Spring and fall are best for outdoor exploration and regional festivals, such as the autumn wine harvest in Vayots Dzor. Yerevan's 2,800th anniversary in October 2018 is sure to be exuberant.

Prince Edward Island, Canada

Why it's wonderful: Prince Edward Island is an irresistible combination of rolling green hills and excellent beaches and seascapes, with bountiful shellfish, a gentle pace and a lively music scene.

Find a white, golden, pink, or red-sand beach and swim in the warmest waters north of the Carolinas. Or, walk out to explore the seabed at low tide. Polish off a couple dozen world-famous Malpeque oysters, then head to Moth Lane Brewing to taste stout made with the shells by the lobster fisherman-turned-brewer.

When to go: Summer is high season, although there's lots to do late spring to early fall and the weather can be fine. Lobster seasons run May until late June and August through October.

Taipei

Why it's wonderful: It's been 30 years since Martial law ended in Taiwan, and since then, the country has begun to introduce itself to the world. Taipei is a city that honors tradition, as is evidenced by the temples that dot the urban landscape, some, such as Longshan Temple, date back centuries, but it also looks forward.

When to go: Fall is by far the most comfortable time to visit after the intense summer heat, and before the winter damp. It's also time to partake in a traditional Moon Festival outdoor barbecue.

French Flanders

Why it's wonderful: Often overlooked, French Flanders is rich in culture, activities, nature and sightseeing. Dunkirk is one of the top seaside destinations in France, with stunning beaches and over 400 shops to visit. According to the French, Lille is France's most underrated city with Europe's biggest annual street market (braderie) in September reason alone to visit. In between Lille and Dunkirk, there are also dozens of hills where people can enjoy nature.

When to go: Visit Lille during the first weekend in September for the braderie, and visit Dunkirk between January and March for Carnival festivities.

Discover more must-visit destinations at metro.us.

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Holland America Line: 10-Day Panama $689* pp — Ocean View $889* pp, Balcony $1179* pp
Princess Cruises: 15-Day Hawaii $1399* pp — Ocean View $1499* pp, Balcony $2099* pp

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Projecting the Phillies 2018 positional lineup

Who will start, and where, for the Phillies in 2018?

EVAN MACY
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The Phillies were not good last season.

As they attempt to return to contention in the NL East next season, it comes as no surprise that there could be a lot of roster turnover. And sure enough, the Phillies have been wheeling and dealing and overhauling their potential line up as the Winter Meetings conclude.

Their bullpen is looking set but their rotation needs some work. As far as position players go, it's an impressive group of unproven prospects with a very high ceiling.

Here is a very early look at what the Phillies starting line up could look like in 2018:

C: Jorge Alfaro

It's finally time for the Phils to hand the keys over to the do-it-all 24-year-old who hit .308 in 107 at bats after a fall call up. He has a little power and is more of an offensive catcher but with some experience in the majors he could learn to handle a pitching staff.

1B: Carlos Santana

The Phils inked the former Indians free agent to a $60 million deal. He hit 57 homers over the last two seasons and appears to be the new Phils' full time first baseman.

2B: Scott Kingery

Expecting Cesar Hernandez here? Well the Phillies look to be going young — having jettisoned longtime shortstop Freddy Galvis last week. Hernandez could be the next moved. Kingery posted a .304 batting average, 26 home runs, 65 RBI, and 29 stolen bases between Double and Triple-A last year and is the second best 2B prospect in baseball.

SS: J.P. Crawford

Which leads us to the Phillies top prospect — slick fielding Crawford. He's finally got a wide open path to the majors, cleared by Galvis' change. He is the guy this year and hopes to avoid the fate of a similarly-touted prospect Domonic Brown, who did not live up to the hype.

3B: Maikel Franco

The Phillies aren't giving up on Franco yet, a great bat but sometimes a head case at third for Philadelphia. Buzz about a potential trade for Manny Machado could change, if the Phils make a move.

RF: Rhys Hoskins

Hoskins power bat isn't going anywhere — he just might be put in a new spot. With Santana playing first look for Hoskins to bat fourth and play outfield.

CF: Odubel Herrera

Like Franco, Herrera has elite skill at the plate but is frustratingly inconsistent. Still, he's the only Phillie aside from Santana inked longterm and he'll start the season in center.

LF: Nick Williams/ Aaron Altherr

The battle to start in left will pit veteran Altherr and returning rookie Williams. Each has power and speed, and each has the potential to develop into a mid-line up bat. Both will make the 25-man roster.

J.P. Crawford and Jorge Alfaro will carry high expectations into 2018. GETTY IMAGES

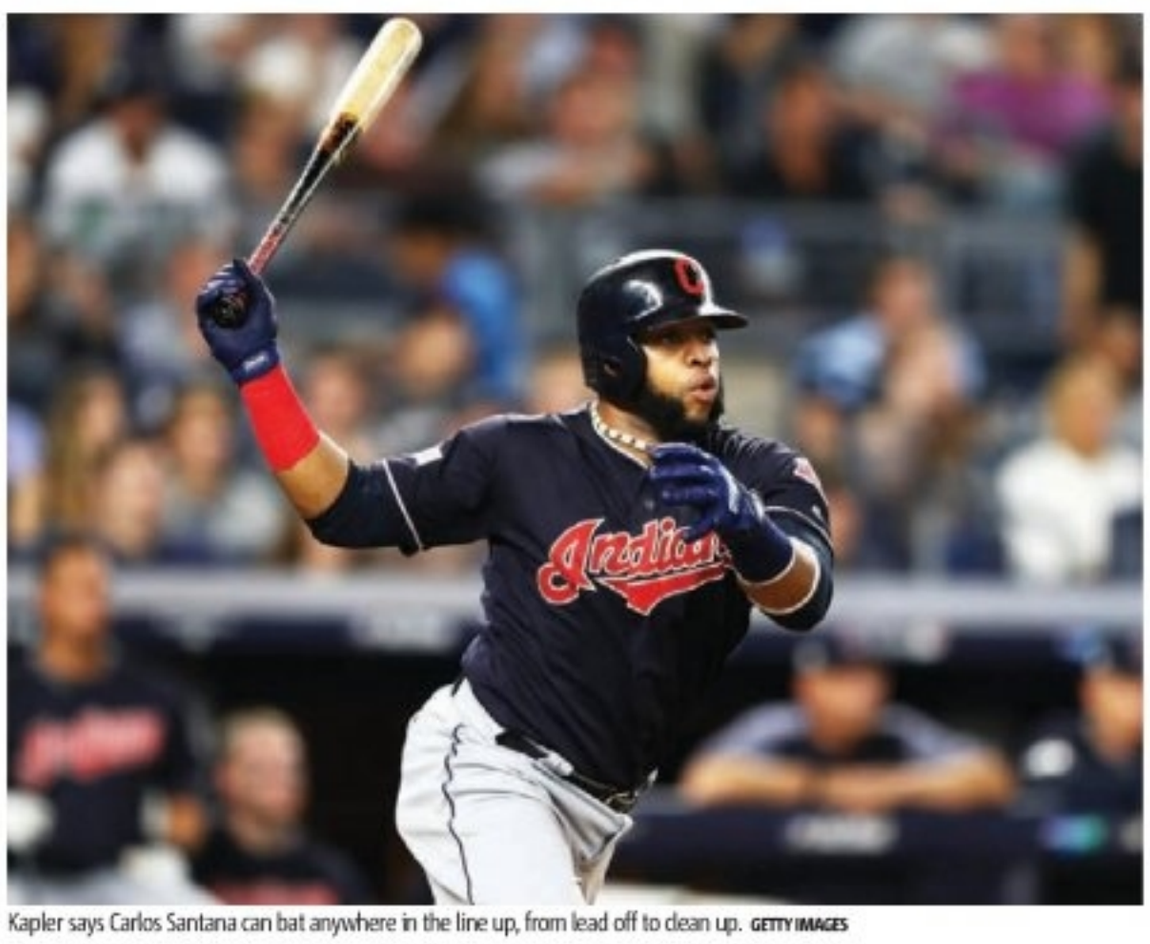
How will Phillies handle logjam after Santana signing?

The Phillies made official Carlos Santana's four-year, $60 million deal Wednesday, but after adding a home run hitting, pitch-taking veteran bat for the middle of the young team's order, some big questions remain unanswered.

A press conference with Santana himself, new manager Gabe Kapler and GM Matt Klentak didn't really provide concrete answers Wednesday. If Santana is playing first base, what will happen to Rhys Hoskins? If Hoskins plays right field, will the Phillies trade Nick Williams or Aaron Altherr? Will they use a platoon?

"This is going to give us an opportunity to mix and match and give them the best opportunity to succeed by matching them up effectively," Kapler said.

After the arrival of Santana, Kapler reached out to Hoskins who he said was very understanding about the signing. He claims the other affected players, too, were on board with the Phils' strategy. There is an abundance of young talent now on the 25-man roster, and a lot of pieces for rookie manager and analytically-minded Kapler to play with.



Kapler says Carlos Santana can bat anywhere in the line up, from lead off to clean up. GETTY IMAGES

"We have talked about this all offseason, since Kap arrived," Klentak said. "The game is evolving. We are moving past the days of a cookie cutter line up the same every day."

The indication is that the Phillies will employ a match up based approach to batting orders. But there is another possibility. Would the Phillies consider moving Williams, Altherr or Hoskins while their stocks are sky high in an effort to nab a top of the rotation starting pitcher? The Santana signing shows perhaps the team is looking to take advantage of a middling NL East (with the Braves and Marlins in full tank-mode and Mets left unimproved). It might be a good time to strike.

Efforts to trade away second baseman Cesar Hernandez haven't yielded any results, as an attempted trade fell through earlier this fall. But they already moved Freddy Galvis and moving Hernandez — who has hit .294 in each of the last two seasons — opens the flood gates for red-hot slugging second baseman Scott Kingery to ascend to the MLB starting role.

Using a high-potential outfielder and Hernandez could offer a tantalizing opportunity for a team shopping a pitcher.

"We need to do everything we can to win at Week 1 of the regular season," Klentak said. "We will try and add the best pitcher we can. The trade market is very expensive for the young controllable starters, the free agent market for the better starters is expensive in it's own way. We have to make sure we have the right balance to find the right fit."

EVAN MACY

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5 Things for 76ers fans to worry about with Embiid out and team slumping

These storylines are quite troubling for Sixers fans.

JEFF MCMENAMIN
@Jeff_McMenamin
sports@metro.us

The Sixers need some holiday cheer this year.

Losers of seven of their past eight games, the Sixers (14-16) are looking more like the Sixers of old with each passing game, rather than the promising team that was set to take the league by storm. Here are five troubling storylines that could leave the Sixers with a lump of coal on Christmas day:

1 Embiid's sore back

ESPN's Adrian Wojnarowski reported on Wednesday that Joel Embiid is suffering from a sore back, which will sideline him in the Sixers' next two games against the Raptors on Thursday and Saturday. It's unknown if he'll be healthy enough to play on Christmas day against the Knicks.

2 No go-to scorer

The Sixers have lost seven games this season by two possessions or less. A lot have attributed this to the lack of a go-to scorer. The Sixers have had plenty of games this season where they've been able to establish a large lead, only to let it slip away in the second half. For as good as Ben Simmons and Embiid are, neither have proved to serve as players that can close out a game offensively. The Sixers are hoping No. 1 pick Markelle Fultz can be that guy upon his return.

3 Brett Brown's rotations

Should 33-year-old J.J. Redick be getting 33.7 minutes per game? Should point guard Jerryd Bayless be playing more minutes than T.J. McConnell? Should forward Amir Johnson be seeing the court at all? These are all concerning questions regarding Brett Brown's rotations this season.

4 Ben Simmons' jump shot

Not having a jump shot in today's NBA is very concerning. The Sixers have made 322 three-pointers on the season. Simmons has made none of them.

Simmons has been trying hard to establish a shot this offseason, but it hasn't translated to in-game action just yet. It might just be the difference to how good the Sixers can become as a team.

The Sixers are missing Joel Embiid, sporting a 1-4 record in five games without him this season. GETTY IMAGES

5 Markelle Fultz's return

Fultz hasn't played a game for the Sixers since the end of October. The last update from the Sixers on Dec. 8 was that he was no longer experiencing pain in his injured right shoulder and he could resume normal on-court basketball activities. He'll be re-evaluated by team doctors at the end of the year. Fultz being back on the court would serve as a late Christmas present to Sixers fans, but that present may not come until mid-January.

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Across

1 Japanese verse
6 Graceful horse
10 Extinct bird
14 Novelist – Drury
15 Pay-stub acronym
16 During
17 Did a lawn chore
18 Very uncommon
19 Heal, as a bone
20 Put out of joint
22 Hill builders
23 Unconscious state
24 Unit of work
26 Part of a fist
30 Painter Georgia –
34 Specks
35 Snakes do it
36 Hawaii's Mauna –
37 Adorn with ornaments
38 Animal's track
40 Avec's opposite
41 PC bailout key
42 Hauled into court
43 Put – (save)
44 Very hot
46 More than two
48 House addition
49 Hold one's own
50 Boat runway
53 Mountain hazards
59 Sandwich cookie
60 Japanese soup
61 Hotel patron
62 Tunes
63 Aspirin target
64 Use Artgum
65 Show enthusiasm
66 Work doggedly
67 Scatter

Down

1 Difficult
2 Range in Asia
3 Classes
4 Faint, with "over"
5 Leaves the space station
6 Ski-lodge type (hyph.)
7 Lariat
8 Real estate unit
9 Guidebook for travelers
10 Injure
11 Prophetic sign
12 Force
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21 Rank above maj.
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26 Wind catchers
27 They wrote in runes
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33 Studio feature
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38 Artificial tan sources
39 Cribbage counter
40 NNW opposite
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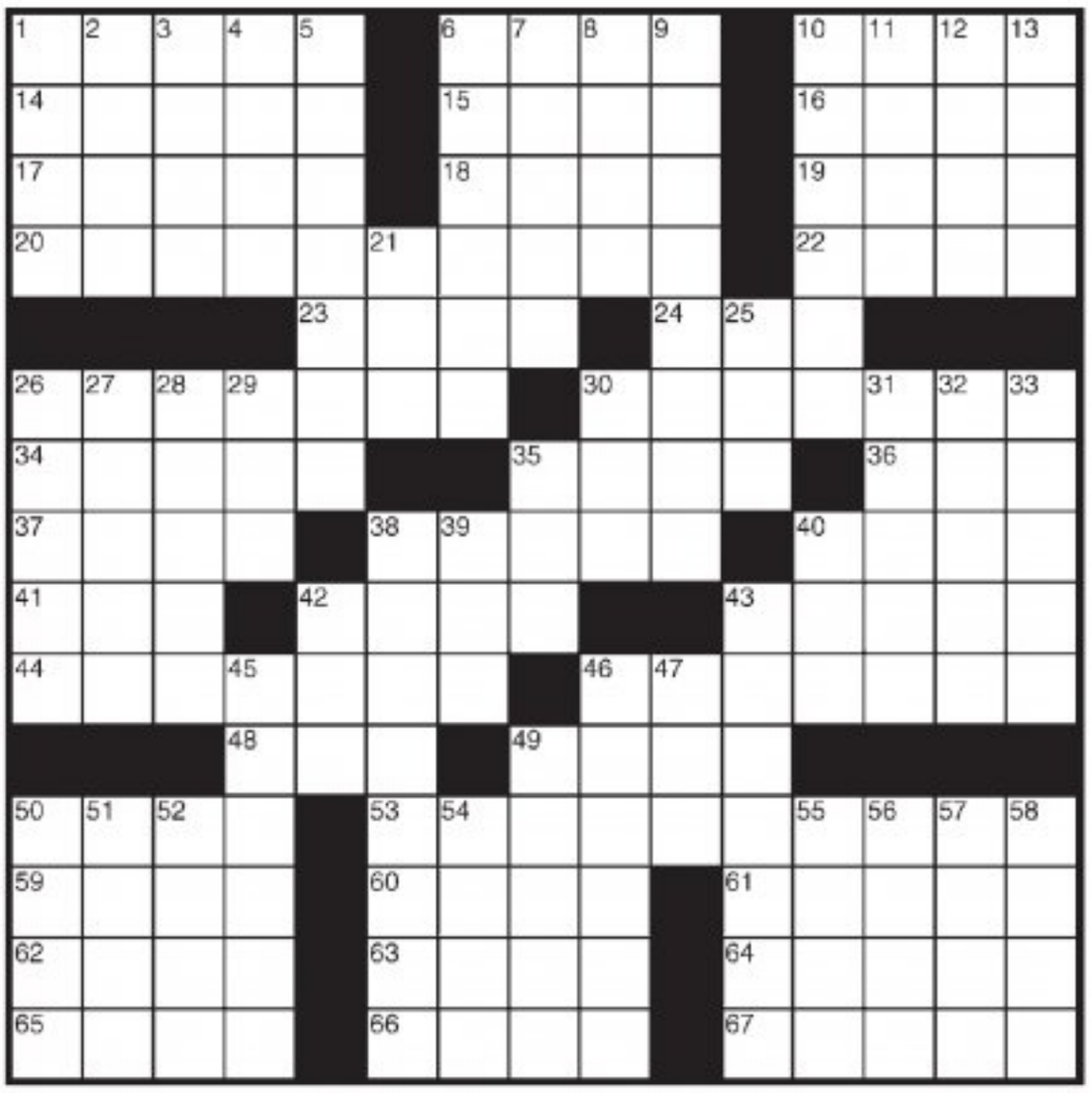
43 Gets even for
45 Sleep
46 Casual goodbye (2 wds.)
47 PCB regulator
49 Timex rival
50 Waterfall sound
51 La Scala highlight
52 Griffin of game shows
54 Small bottle
55 Short-spoken
56 Get wind of
57 Latin I verb
58 Burgoo or daube



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easy

6	2			7				
			5				9	
		7			6	1	5	
	6		8	3	1			4
	8						1	
2			9	6	4		3	
	3	8	6			9		
	1				8			
				1			4	7

hard

4			3		2	1		
	8							9
	2			8	6	3		
	6	3	9			7		
			6		7			
		7			8	5	9	
		2	5	1			3	
5							7	
		8	7		4			1

metro.us/horoscopes

Aries A personal change can be made. You'll feel good about the way you look and feel if you choose a healthy lifestyle and project self-confidence. Romance is highlighted.

Taurus You'll face opposition if you are physically, emotionally or financially excessive. Consider the consequences and show more discipline in the way you live, act and spend.

Gemini Don't take on responsibilities that don't belong to you. Too much of anything will leave you in a vulnerable position. Aim to please, but stay within your budget.

Cancer Don't be fooled by a smooth talker. When it comes to handling your money and personal affairs, you need to take charge. Use your imagination to find a workable solution.

Leo Take care of your responsibilities or someone will complain. You can have fun after you take care of business. A personal change will lead to compliments.

Virgo Keep your eye on the ball. Don't let emotions drag you off-course. It's important to search for truth and to make your decisions based on facts, not on assumptions.

Libra Taking on too much will make you anxious. You are best off finding a way to cut back. A realistic assessment will help you make fewer unrealistic promises.

Scorpio Don't let your emotions take control when dealing with friends. You may not agree with everyone, but diplomacy should be implemented in the spirit of the season.

Sagittarius Move things around at home to suit your current situation. Visitors or guests will appreciate your hospitality and want to return the favor in whatever way possible.

Capricorn Look at the possibilities that are within reach, and hone in on what it is you want to accomplish before the year comes to a close. Set realistic goals.

Aquarius Emotions will surface, making it difficult for you to make a decision. Don't let anger or remorse dictate how you deal with others. Do what's best for you.

Pisces A change of heart will disrupt your plans. Try not to show disappointment. If you carry on, you will be surprised by the outcome. EUGENIA LAST

Yesterday's answers

A	J	A	R	■	E	D	I	F	Y	■	A	I	L	S
C	U	B	E	■	V	E	N	U	E	■	T	R	E	E
E	L	L	E	■	A	L	E	R	T	■	L	A	V	E
D	E	E	S	■	D	U	P	L	I	C	A	T	E	D
■	P	R	E	T	E	X	T	■	■	U	S	E	R	S
■	■	■	■	O	D	E	■	J	O	T	■	■	■	■
F	E	N	C	E	■	■	O	I	L	S	H	A	L	E
E	C	H	O	■	T	I	N	G	E	■	A	L	I	T
B	O	L	D	F	A	C	E	■	■	R	I	F	L	E
■	■	■	■	A	U	K	■	G	O	P	■	■	■	■
T	A	P	E	S	■	■	F	O	R	M	A	L	S	■
A	D	A	P	T	A	T	I	O	N	■	W	I	P	E
M	I	S	C	■	D	E	N	S	E	■	A	M	O	S
P	E	S	O	■	O	R	D	E	R	■	R	I	O	T
S	U	E	T	■	S	A	S	S	Y	■	E	T	N	A

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